



PRESS INFORMATION FOR April 2021:

Ledbury Poetry Critics announces its third and largest intake of new mentees, growing from eleven to thirty members.



In 2017, in collaboration with Ledbury Poetry Festival, the Ledbury Poetry Critics programme launched, offering a year-long intensive mentorship scheme for 8 emerging poetry reviewers of colour: Dzifa Benson, Srishti Krishnamoorthy-Cavell, Mary Jean Chan, Jade Cuttle, Sarala Estruch, Maryam Hessavi, Nasser Hussain and Jennifer Lee-Tsai. In 2019, we selected four more critics: Victoria Adukwei Bulley, Joanna Lee, Sarah-Jean Zubair, and Stephanie Sy-Quia. These critics have since published reviews in *The Guardian*, *The Telegraph*, *The New Statesman*, *the Times Literary Supplement*, *The Poetry Review*, *Poetry Wales*, *Poetry London* and many other magazines and journals.

Our latest annual report, released in June 2020, found that since the Ledbury Critics Programme the quantity of reviews written by critics of colour in magazines and newspapers in the UK and Ireland had more than doubled. Critical writing by fellows of the programme can be read across the UK media, and Ledbury Critic Mary Jean Chan became first ever poet of colour to win the Costa Prize for Poetry in 2020.

The programme has now been awarded funding by an Arts and Humanities Research Council EDI Fellowship to expand as we set a long-term goal that more critics of colour should take up editorial positions — a professional level that remains overwhelmingly white. To tackle this, we are organizing ten editorships-in-residency with our partner publications, which will take place between now and the end of 2021.

The expanded network of critics will participate via a series of free public panel events, workshops and masterclasses in 2021. These will be hosted by Ledbury Poetry Critics partner organisations: the *London Review of Books*, the Royal Society of Literature, the Scottish BAME Writers Network, the Forward Arts Foundation, Spread the Word, Poetry Ireland and Literature Wales.

In addition, an accessible and protected database (via Uni of Liverpool) of the findings taken from the report will be made publically available to readers, critics and researchers of UK poetry culture. These expanded quantitative measures will be shared and refined in consultation with editors, arts policy organisations, statisticians and critics, as will a method of annual reporting and peer auditing, to ensure accuracy and reliability of data.

Mentorship has been foundational for the Ledbury Poetry Critics since the initiative was founded by Sandeep Parmar (Liverpool) and Sarah Howe (King's College London) in 2017, joined by Vidyan Ravinthiran (Harvard), Catherine Gander (Maynooth), Janine Bradbury (York St John), Dave Coates (Liverpool) and Alycia Pirmohamed (Liverpool).

2021 mentees are:
 Amaan Hyder
 Annie Fan
 April Yee
 Chloe Hasti Crowther
 Devina Shah
 Esther Heller
 Gazelle Mba
 Helen Howell
 Isabelle Baafi
 Leah Jun Oh
 Maggie Wang
 Mantra Mukim
 Memoona Zahid
 Niroshini Somasundaram
 Oluwaseun Olayiwola
 Pratyusha Prakash
 Shalini Sengupta
 Shash Trevett
 Yvette Siegert

2021 mentors are:
 Sarah Howe
 Sandeep Parmar
 Vidyan Ravinthiran
 Jane Yeh
 Will Harris
 Jay G. Ying
 Vahni Capildeo
 Kit Fan
 Nisha Ramayya
 Jeremy Noel-Tod
 Dzifa Benson
 Jade Cuttle
 Dave Coates
 Khairani Barokka
 Leo Boix
 Seán Hewitt



Sandeep Parmar



Sarah Howe



Vidyan Ravinthiran



Jane Yeh



Will Harris



Jay G. Ying



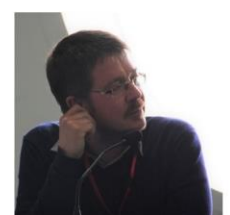
Vahni Capildeo



Kit Fan



Nisha Ramayya



Jeremy Noel-Tod



Leo Boix



Dzifa Benson



Jade Cuttle



Khairani Barokka



Seán Hewitt

Sandeep Parmar, co-founder of the programme says:

“My sense is that in the long term, critics of colour will find in-roads into every poetry reviewing platform, and editors will be encouraged, by a revived interest in reviewing, to raise the profile of reviewing on their pages....on the whole, the programme has received tremendous support from editors and, where necessary, we will keep reminding those few who have yet to take action.”

Emily Berry, editor of the *Poetry Review* says:

“The high standard of the work produced by the first round of Ledbury Poetry Critics gives the lie to the demeaning notion often trotted out by detractors of diversity schemes that 'quality suffers'. In fact this scheme has been hugely enriching to poetry reviewing culture overall... reviewing culture urgently needs more of this kind of attention and input if it is to remain alive.”

Jade Cuttle, Ledbury Critic and Commissioning Editor (Arts), *The Times* says:

“The Ledbury Critics Programme has been absolutely crucial to developing my credentials as a critic – I've been asked to write for publications like the *Guardian*, *The Times Literary Supplement*, *The Poetry Review* and many others as a direct result of being selected for this brilliant scheme. The intensive workshops, one-to-one mentorship and critical feedback has really helped to hone my craft, and in ways that reach beyond the proclaimed eight-month duration by developing long-term professional relations.”

For media enquiries about Ledbury Poetry Critics and Ledbury Poetry Festival please contact :

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or Phillippa Slinger, Festival Manager on manager@poetryfestival.co.uk / 01531 636232

Follow us on Twitter [@LedburyCritics](https://twitter.com/LedburyCritics) or find us on poetry-festival.co.uk

Notes To Editors

Biographies



Isabelle Baafi

Isabelle Baafi is a writer, poet and critic from London. Her debut pamphlet, *Ripe* (2020, ignitionpress), was the Poetry Book Society's Pamphlet Choice for Spring 2021. She was the winner of the 2019 Vincent Cooper Literary Prize, and was shortlisted for the 2021 Brunel International African Poetry Prize, the 2020 Bridport Prize for Poetry, and the 2019 Oxford Brookes International Poetry Competition. She was also Commended in the 2020 Verve Poetry Festival Competition. Her poems have been published in *The Poetry Review*, *Magma*, *Anthropocene*, *Tentacular*, and elsewhere. She was a member of the 2019-20 London Library's Emerging Writers Programme, and the 2020 Griot's Well Programme with Writerz and Scribez. She is also an Obsidian Foundation Fellow and a Board Member at *Magma*. She is currently working on her debut poetry collection, and you can keep up with her on Twitter [@isabellebaafi](https://twitter.com/isabellebaafi), or on her website, <http://www.isabellebaafi.com>.



Helen Bowell

Helen Bowell is a London-based poet and co-director of [Dead \[Women\] Poets Society](https://www.deadwomenpoetsociety.com). She is a graduate of The Writing Squad, an alumna of the London Library Emerging Writers Programme, London Writers Awards and the Roundhouse Poetry Collective. Helen won the 2020 Bronze Creative Future Writers' Award and was commended in the Mslexia Poetry Competition in 2021. She was Poetry Business's digital Poet in Residence February 2021. Her

poems have appeared in *bath magg*, *Poetry Birmingham*, *Ambit*, *Introduction X: The Poetry Business Book of New Poets* (2017) and elsewhere. She works at The Poetry Society, tweets @helen_bowell, and her website is helenbowell.co.uk.



Annie Fan

Annie Fan (she/they) reads law at Oxford University, where she was president of the poetry society. Their poetry appears or will appear in *Poetry London*, *Puerto Del Sol*, *The Offing*, *Ambit*, and *PN Review*, among others. She is currently working on a commission in response to the COVID-19 pandemic for the Barbican Centre in London. When not writing or studying for exams they can be found trying to recreate viral pasta recipes, buying too many earrings, and basking in the sun.



Hasti

Hasti is a British-Iranian poet and screenwriter based in South East London. Her poems have appeared in the *Poetry Review* and *PERVERSE* mag, but most often at open mic & poetry night *FRESH LIP*. Most recently, she has recorded a one-off radio show for Montez Press titled *The Cyborg Archives*, which explores the idea of the cyborg as a being of mixed heritage. Hasti has also co-written a short sci-fi film, which is currently in production with Film4. You can find her on Twitter @youarehasti.



Amaan Hyder

Amaan Hyder is the author of *At Hajj* (Penned in the Margins, 2017). His poetry has appeared in *The Guardian*, *Poetry Review*, *Poetry London* and elsewhere. He is studying for a PhD at Royal Holloway, University of London, and tweets @hyder_amaan.



Esther Kondo

Esther Kondo is a poet, writer, Barbican Young Poet 2018/2019, and experimental poetry filmmaker. They recently graduated with an Undergraduate Diploma in Creative Writing from the University of Oxford and have performed their poetry amongst other places at the Roundhouse, APT Gallery and the Barbican. Their website is <http://www.estherkondo.com>, and you can find them on Instagram @howtogrowaflower.



Gazelle Mba

Gazelle Mba is a Nigerian writer, editor, radio host and DJ currently based in London. She is one of the editors of *Nommo*, a magazine dedicated to anti-imperialist struggles in the global south (nommomag.com), and tweets @mba_gazelle.



Mantra Mukim

Mantra Mukim is a doctoral candidate in the Department of English & Comparative Literary Studies, University of Warwick. His poems and essays have appeared in *Magma*, *Charles River Journal*, *Caravan*, *Almost Island*, *Review 31* and *Asymptote* among other places.



Oluwaseun Olayiwola

Oluwaseun is an American choreographer, poet, and critic based in London. He recently completed his MFA in Choreography from the Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance. In 2018, he was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to the United Kingdom, where he began to write poetry. His poetry attempts to mine his deepest selves as a Nigerian-American, a queer man, as a dancer and a writer. His website is oluwaseunolayiwola.com, and he can be found on Twitter and Instagram @itsamule.



Leah Oh

Leah Oh is a British and Malaysian-Chinese writer living in London. Her recent work is an MA dissertation exploring unfixity, fluidity, and opacity in the work of Mei-Mei Berssenbrugge and Clarice Lispector.



Pratyusha

Pratyusha is an Indo-Swiss writer based in London. Her latest pamphlet, *Bulbul Calling*, was published with Bitter Melon Press in 2020. She co-edits *amberflora* and writes poetry, prose and reviews. Her website can be found at <https://pratyusha.co.uk/>, and she tweets @nala_e_bulbul.



Shalini Sengupta

Shalini Sengupta is a final year PhD student supervised by Professor Sara Crangle and Dr. Samuel Solomon at the University of Sussex, UK. Her PhD is fully funded by the Chancellor's International Research Scholarship and explores the concept of modernist difficulty in British (and diasporic) poetry through the lens of intersectionality. In 2019-2020, she was a Research Assistant for the May Sinclair Critical Editions Project at the University of Sheffield, and was funded by the British Academy/Leverhulme Small Research Grants. Her academic writing has been published in *Modernism/modernity Print Plus*, *Contemporary Women's Writing*, and the *Journal of British and Irish Innovative Poetry*. She has also been invited to write a book chapter on contemporary UK poetry, which is forthcoming with *The Bloomsbury Companion to Contemporary Poetry in Ireland and the UK* in 2022. You can find her on Twitter @shaliniseng.



Devina Shah

Devina Shah reads English and Modern Languages at Wadham College, Oxford. She is the founder of *Quince Magazine*, an online literary and visual arts journal featuring the work of emerging, established and marginalised writers and artists from around the world. You can find her on Instagram @devinawaves. <http://www.quincemag.com>



Yvette Siegert

Yvette Siegert is a Latinx poet and translator. She has edited for the *United Nations* and *The New Yorker* and has received support from CantoMundo, the Community of Writers, the *Kenyon Review* Writers Workshops, and the National Endowment for the Arts. Her work was recently shortlisted for the Rebecca Swift Foundation's Women Poets' Prize and the PEN Award for Poetry in Translation, and her translations of Alejandra Pizarnik, *Extracting the Stone of Madness: Poems 1962–1972* (New Directions), won the Best Translated Book Award for Poetry. She is currently reading for a D.Phil. in Colombian Caribbean literature at Merton College, Oxford. You can find her @TheChronotope on Twitter.



S. Niroshini

S. Niroshini is a writer and poet based in London. She received Third Prize in the Poetry London Prize 2020 and a London Writers Award for Literary Fiction. Born in Sri Lanka, she was educated in Colombo, Melbourne and Oxford and studied English literature in her undergraduate degree and languages as part of a Master's degree in Modern South Asian Studies. Her writing has appeared in publications such as *The Good Journal*, *On Bodies* (3 of Cups Press) and *Wasafiri*. Her debut poetry pamphlet *Darling Girl* is forthcoming with Bad Betty Press in May 2021. Website: niroshini.com Twitter: @niroshinisoma



Shash Trevett

Shash Trevett is a Tamil from Sri Lanka who came to the UK to escape the civil war. She is a poet and a translator of Tamil poetry into English. She has collaborated with artists and composers and is a winner of a Northern Writers' Award. Her pamphlet *From a Borrowed Land* will be published in May 2021 by Smith|Doorstop. She is currently co-editing (with Vidyan Ravinthiran and Seni Seneviratne) an anthology of Tamil, English and Sinhala poetry from Sri Lanka and its diaspora communities. Shash was the 2019 Apprentice Poet in Residence at Ilkley Literature Festival and is a 2021 Visible Communities Translator in Residence at the National Writing Centre. She is a Board Member of *Modern Poetry in Translation*, and is on Twitter @ShashTrevett.



Maggie Wang

Maggie Wang is an undergraduate at the University of Oxford. Her writing has appeared in *Ruminare*, *Not Very Quiet*, *perhappened mag*, and others. She has also won awards from the Poetry Society's Young Poets Network, Singapore Unbound, and the Literary Nest. When not writing, she enjoys playing the piano and exploring nature.



April Yee

April Yee is a writer and translator of power and postcolonialism. A Harvard and Tin House alumna, she reported in more than a dozen countries before moving to the UK, where she reads for *Triquarterly*, contributes to *Ploughshares* online, and mentors for University of the Arts London's Refugee Journalism Project. She can be found at <http://www.aprilyee.com>, and @aprilyee on Twitter.



Memoona Zahid

Memoona Zahid is a Pakistani-British poet and writer based in London. After graduating from Goldsmiths, she recently completed her MA in Creative Writing from UEA. Her publications include *Pain*, *Cusp*, *Anthropocene* and *bath magg*. As well as poetry, she also writes essays and reviews, her website is <http://memoonazahid.co.uk/>